

national wilderness system marked an innovation in the American conservation movement—wilderness would be a place where our “management strategy” would be to leave lands essentially undeveloped.

The original Wilderness Act established 9.1 million acres of Forest Service land in 54 wilderness areas. The support for wilderness has continued through the 111th Congress with the creation of 52 new wilderness areas in the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009. Today, the wilderness system is comprised of over 109 million acres in over 750 wilderness areas, across 44 States, and administered by 4 Federal agencies: the Forest Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service in the Department of the Interior.

As we in this body know well, the passage and enactment of the Wilderness Act was a remarkable accomplishment that required steady, bipartisan commitment, institutional support, and strong leadership. The U.S. Senate was instrumental in shaping this very important law, and this anniversary gives us the opportunity to recognize this role.

As a Senator from Wisconsin, I feel a special bond with this issue. The concept of wilderness is inextricably linked with Wisconsin. Wisconsin has produced great wilderness thinkers and leaders in the wilderness movement such as Senator Gaylord Nelson and the writer and conservationist Aldo Leopold, whose “A Sand County Almanac” helped to galvanize the environmental movement. Also notable is Sierra Club founder John Muir, whose birthday is the day before Earth Day. Wisconsin also produced Sigurd Olson, one of the founders of The Wilderness Society.

I am privileged to hold the Senate seat held by Gaylord Nelson, a man for whom I have the greatest admiration and respect. He is a well-known and widely respected former Senator and former two-term Governor of Wisconsin, and the founder of Earth Day. In his later years, he devoted his time to the protection of wilderness by serving as a counselor to The Wilderness Society—an activity which was quite appropriate for someone who was also a cosponsor, along with former Senator Proxmire, of the bill that became the Wilderness Act.

The testimony at congressional hearings and the discussion of the bill in the press of the day reveals Wisconsin’s crucial role in the long and continuing American debate about our wild places, and in the development of the Wilderness Act. The names and ideas of John Muir, Sigurd Olson, and, especially, Aldo Leopold, appear time and time again in the legislative history.

Senator Clinton Anderson of New Mexico, chairman of what was then called the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, stated that his support

of the wilderness system was the direct result of discussions he had held almost forty years before with Leopold, who was then in the Southwest with the Forest Service. It was Leopold who, while with the Forest Service, advocated the creation of a primitive area in the Gila National Forest in New Mexico in 1923. The Gila Primitive Area formally became part of the wilderness system when the Wilderness Act became law.

In a statement in favor of the Wilderness Act in the New York Times, then-Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall discussed ecology and what he called “a land ethic” and referred to Leopold as the instigator of the modern wilderness movement. At a Senate hearing in 1961, David Brower of the Sierra Club went so far as to claim that “no man who reads Leopold with an open mind will ever again, with a clear conscience, be able to step up and testify against the wilderness bill.” For others, the ideas of Olson and Muir—particularly the idea that preserving wilderness is a way for us to better understand our country’s history and the frontier experience—provided a justification for the wilderness system.

I would like to remind colleagues of the words of Aldo Leopold in his 1949 book, “A Sand County Almanac.” He said, “The outstanding scientific discovery of the twentieth century is not the television, or radio, but rather the complexity of the land organism. Only those who know the most about it can appreciate how little is known about it.”

We still have much to learn, but this anniversary of the Wilderness Act reminds us how far we have come and how the commitment to public lands that the Senate and the Congress demonstrated 45 years ago continues to benefit all Americans.

I would like to recognize the following organizations for their efforts to continue protecting our wild places: American Rivers, Alaska Wilderness League, Campaign for America’s Wilderness, Earthjustice, Natural Resources Defense Council, Pew Environment Group, Republicans for Environmental Protection, Sierra Club, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, and The Wilderness Society.

WOMEN’S EQUALITY DAY

Mrs. McCASKILL. Mr. President, in observance of the upcoming Women’s Equality Day on August 26, 2009, I wish to pay tribute to the women soldiers and civilians of the U.S. Army who serve and defend our great country each day—whether in garrison communities here in the United States, like at Ft. Leonard Wood in my native Missouri, or on the front lines of battle in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places around the world.

Although women did not receive equal treatment or recognition while serving in the military during the Civil War or the wars of the 20th century,

they now serve in many roles and capacities in the Active, Guard and Reserve components and perform equally as well as their male counterparts. Today’s Army fighting women are critical to the success of the Army’s mission, and their sacrifice on the battlefield demonstrates a clear call to duty that transcends any supposed gender limitations.

One such example of this bravery is Silver Star recipient SPC Monica Brown, who, when her convoy was attacked while on patrol in Afghanistan, disregarded a hail of enemy fire that threatened her own life and jumped into action in her role as a medic to pull wounded soldiers to safety and render lifesaving aid to them. I also think about the heroic actions of SGT Leigh Ann Hester, another Silver Star recipient and military police platoon leader. When Sergeant Hester and her fellow soldiers were ambushed south of Baghdad, she bravely led her unit through an insurgent “kill zone” and into a flanking position to assault the enemy with fire, killing three insurgents herself.

These acts of selflessness are also mirrored in the spirit of volunteerism and commitment that Army civilian women exhibit as they deploy to combat zones wherever the Army needs them. Like their male counterparts, these women are serving honorably and selflessly as architects, doctors, nurses, lawyers, structural engineers, logisticians, and in scores of other occupational specialties. And like our military women, they do justice to the millions of women who preceded them in history to fight for equal rights for women in America.

As we celebrate the great accomplishments of women in the military on Women’s Equality Day, it is imperative that our Nation and leaders continue to evaluate additional opportunities for military service by women. While women have achieved and contributed so much to the Army and the overall military mission, some barriers still exist.

I look forward to a day when more combat aviation and ground occupational specialties will be open to women, for instance. I look forward to a day when there will be more women in the general officer ranks to accompany my good friend GEN Ann Dunwoody, the Army’s first and only female four-star general in its entire 234-year history. Our military and government must never slow its commitment to giving women the access to the full range of opportunities that the military has to offer. In doing so, I am confident that these few remaining barriers will fall.

I strongly encourage my fellow members to honor Women’s Equality Day on August 26 by thanking the military and civilian women of the U.S. Army and their families of their States for their commitment, bravery and unflinching support to our great Nation.

NATIONAL HEALTH CENTER WEEK

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the week of August 9, 2009, as National Health Center Week. National health centers provide care to 18 million people a year throughout the United States, through services at Community, Migrant, Homeless and Public Housing Health Center delivery sites. I wish to take the opportunity in a week dedicated to these sites to promote awareness on the expansive role they play in the health care of some of our Nation's most underserved citizens. It is important to recognize that at a time when health care costs have increased considerably across the country, these health centers have continued to serve an increasing number of patients without compromising the quality of care.

The Community Health Center Program, which operates in communities that are designated as medically underserved, has played a particularly important role as a health safety net provider in my State of South Dakota. Significant barriers limit access to quality health care for thousands of South Dakotans. The successful efforts of our State's community health centers have helped reduce many of these barriers by providing quality care to our State's low-income citizens. These health centers provide onsite dental, pharmaceutical, mental health, and substance abuse services that are often hard to come by in rural communities. In South Dakota, more than 50,000 patients received care in 2007, 40 percent of whom were uninsured and an additional 25 percent were covered under Medicaid.

I strongly support this model of health care delivery and commend the hard work of those in South Dakota and across the Nation in providing accessible, high-quality health care to those most in need.

WIPA AND PABSS REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2009

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I urge the Senate to pass by unanimous consent the WIPA and PABSS Reauthorization Act of 2009—H.R. 3325—which was passed recently by the House of Representatives. The bill will extend, for 1 year, two programs that provide important assistance for Social Security and supplemental security income, SSI, disability beneficiaries who would like to return to work.

Both of these programs were included in the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, which passed Congress with bipartisan support. Under the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance, WIPA, program, the Social Security Administration, SSA, funds community-based organizations to provide personalized assistance to Social Security and SSI disability beneficiaries who want to work, by helping these beneficiaries understand SSA's complex work incentive policies

and the effect that working will have on their benefits. This program can help to reduce the fears many beneficiaries have about attempting to return to work.

Under the Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security, PABSS, Program, SSA awards grants to protection and advocacy systems to provide legal advocacy services that beneficiaries need to secure, maintain, or regain employment. The PABSS Program also provides beneficiaries with information and advice about obtaining vocational rehabilitation and employment services.

The Finance Committee and other committees in Congress have received testimony from disability advocates and other stakeholders about the importance of these programs to increasing employment among disability beneficiaries.

The Social Security Administration is currently authorized to spend \$23 million annually from its administrative budget to fund the WIPA Program, and \$7 million annually to fund the PABSS Program. However, the authorization for both programs expires on September 30, 2009.

This bill will extend the WIPA and PABSS Programs for 1 year, with no changes, while the relevant committees in Congress consider a longer term reauthorization. This 1-year extension will ensure that these programs can continue to provide disability beneficiaries with the assistance they need to return to work.

I thank my colleagues for their support for temporarily extending these important programs.

SNAKE HEADWATERS WILD AND SCENIC DESIGNATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I wish to speak on the Craig Thomas Snake Headwaters Legacy Act of 2008.

Shortly before Craig Thomas passed away, he introduced legislation, S. 1281, to protect the Snake River headwaters. His goal was to designate hundreds of miles of river in northwest Wyoming as wild and scenic. At the time, Senator Thomas stated that this designation would be a "badge of honor" for these rivers.

On May 15, 2007, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks held a hearing on S. 1281. Senator Thomas invited Jack Dennis, a world renowned fly fisherman, to testify in support of the bill.

During his testimony Jack Dennis eloquently made the case for wild and scenic designation stating "Without hesitation, the rivers and streams of the Snake River Headwaters are the most stunningly beautiful in the world." Jack further testified that "To walk these rivers and hear the music of the rivers, to see beavers swimming out of the lodge, to watch an elk come down to the river to drink at sunrise—these rivers touch all our souls."

On Sunday, August 9, 2009, I will be participating in a community event in Jackson Hole, WY, to officially designate the Snake River headwaters as wild and scenic. I will be joining Susan Thomas, Jack Dennis, and hundreds of grassroots organizations and individuals who never gave up.

Like so many others, the river touched Craig's soul. This coming Sunday, we will finish the task Craig Thomas started. It is a remarkable accomplishment—388 miles of river dedicated as wild and scenic, 388 miles of pristine water that will be protected for the enjoyment of future generations.

What an honor indeed.

SENATE EMPLOYEES' CHILD CARE CENTER

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the Senate Employees' Child Care Center for 25 years of service.

The Senate Employees' Child Care Center opened its doors on February 27, 1984, as the first childcare center on Capitol Hill. Its successful opening is attributed to the dedication and hard work of Senate Members, employees, and their families.

The center has grown, much like the children and Senate families it has served. On opening day, the center had 27 children enrolled from the ages of 18 months to 5 years. By comparison, the center today has grown to a full enrollment of 68 children from the ages of 10 weeks to 5 years.

The center first opened in what was known as the Immigration Building and is now the Capitol Police headquarters. As it outgrew that space, a new facility was constructed nearby. Enrollment and growth continued, necessitating the construction of a new facility in December of 1999.

While many things have changed over the past 25 years, such as the location, number of children served, and the faces of teachers and families, one constant is this: the Senate Employees' Child Care Center remains a first-class facility. Families continue to appreciate the comfort of knowing their children are in a safe and enriching educational environment. In fact, many families refer to the Center as a "school" rather than a daycare facility.

We and our staffs strive for excellence. The Senate Employees' Child Care Center does the same. In 1989, it became the first center in Washington, DC, to achieve accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, NAEYC. This accreditation is the "gold standard" for early childhood education, and the center has maintained it continuously since 1989.

As in the early days, families with children enrolled in the center are encouraged to be involved in its daily operations. Many families spend their lunch hours doing "nap duty," others